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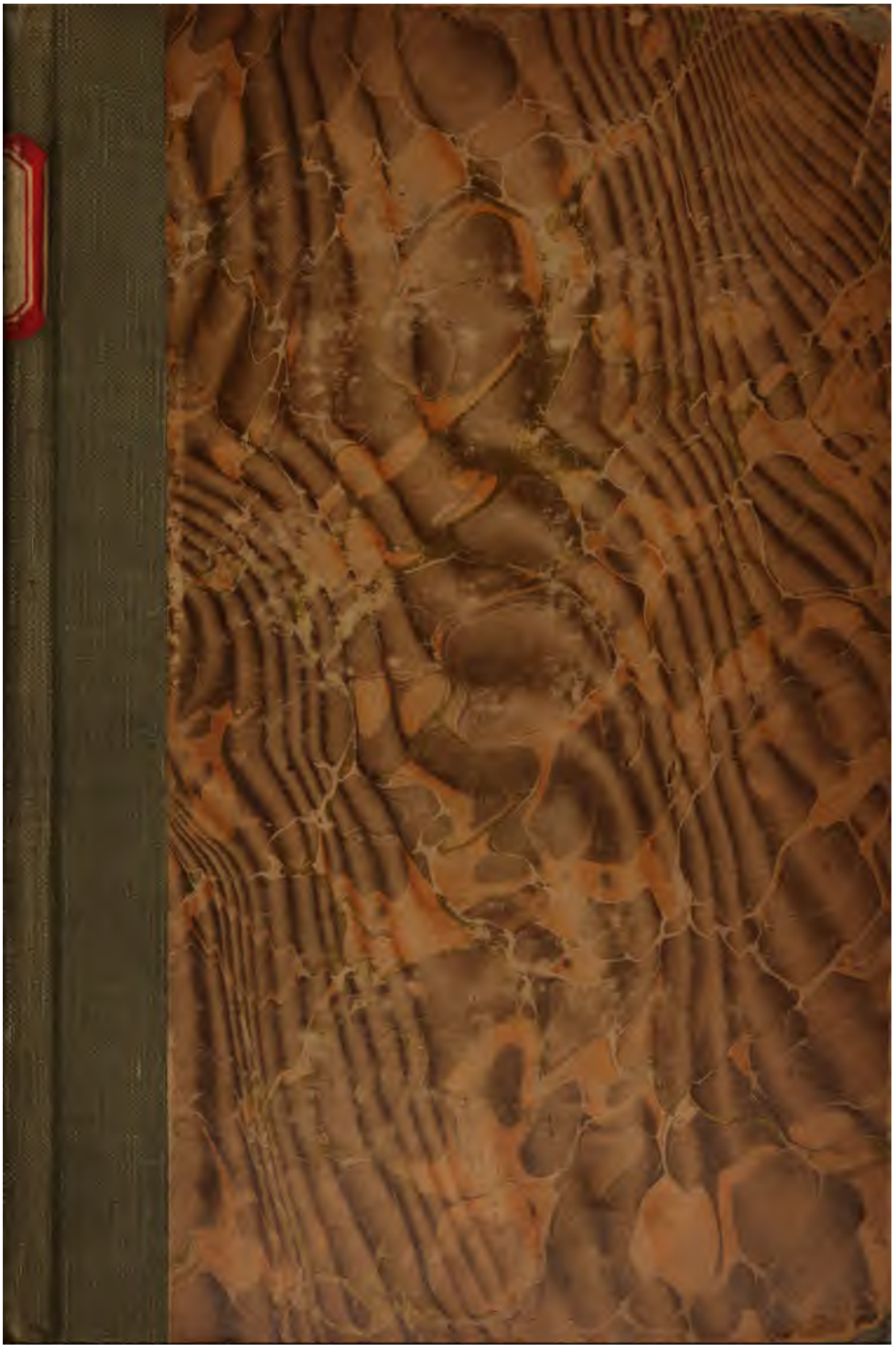

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REMINISCENCES OF A VOLUNTEER.

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF

THE VICTORY AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

NEW YORK:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,
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WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE BATTLE OF DORKING.

"Is that your old sword, grandpapa?"

"Yes, my boy; that's the old sword I wore some fifty years ago, during the hard fighting that followed the invasion."

"May I take it down and look at it? How it is notched!"

"Ah! those notches could tell a tale or two; they were good hard blows, such as I rather doubt whether the lazy, luxurious young men of the present day could deliver."

"Oh! grandpapa, do tell us all about them—tell us the story of all the fighting."

"Surely you must have heard all about it. I believe I fight my battles over again, after dinner, till everybody is sick of the subject."

"But we are not sick of the subject, grandpapa. We don't dine with you every day, you know."

"Well, well; I suppose your generation hasn't heard so much about it as the last; so here goes. Shall I begin with the Battle of Dorking, where we got a regular licking, as you boys would call it?"

"No, no, grandpapa; tell us about a victory or two. I prefer them to the defeats."

"Ah! you ought to remember the defeats as well as the victories. Our self-confidence and carelessness about fifty years ago cost us a deal of bloodshed, money, and trouble, and a most disastrous commercial crisis; indeed, there are people to this day who say we are a ruined country through it. There's old What's-his-name, who was a volunteer in those days, who's always croaking about the condition of the nation. But, in my opinion, we are stronger and richer than ever. However, you don't want a disquisition on questions of that sort."

"No, grandpapa; let's have the fighting."

"It is difficult to describe the state of mind into which England was plunged by the great defeat in the neighborhood of Dorking, and the advance of the enemy on London. A very large party in the nation, especially amongst the trading classes, counselled submission. 'Make the best terms you can with the invader, and get rid of him,' they said; 'fighting is unbusiness-like.' But the old party in the country was the stronger. 'Submission!' said they. 'No; by Gad! the old British lion hasn't lost his teeth and cut his claws just yet. Submission! When we've the hardiest population in the whole world; and were acknowledged to be the finest fighters only some fifty years ago.' And the 'great heart of the nation,' as a popular paper of that time used to call it, did not palpitate with fear. The blood may have been chilled at the first sound of the enemy's guns on the green hills of Surrey; but it soon rushed through the veins of England with the old fiery energy of the Anglo-Saxon race, thoroughly aroused.

"In the north and midland counties, and in the west, the militia and volunteer corps set up their standards, figuratively speaking, and the recruits flocked in by hundreds. The stalwart miners of Northumberland and Durham, of Cornwall and the Welsh coal-districts; the great muscular navvies, and healthy agricultural laborers, the sharp mechanics of the manufacturing towns, and the yeomen, gentlemen, clerks—in fact, everybody rushed to arms. The principal difficulty was to find the arms to rush to. However, notwithstanding the confusion which reigned in governmental departments, the rifles and ammunition in store were conveyed safely out of reach of the enemy, and by giving the breech-loaders to the best shots, and serving out the old-fashioned muzzle-loading musket—then known as Brown Bess—to the others, for close-quarter shooting and bayonet work, we managed to present a creditable array. But the fear, of course, was, that our fellows would stand no more chance against the disciplined invader than the hasty levies of the French in the preceding year. But, you see, we had this great advantage—that our Englishmen, rough fellows though many of them were, became easily amenable to discipline, and required no teaching to render them calm and steady. And plenty of good officers turned up; for, owing to the purchase system which had prevailed in our army up to that time, promotion had been rapid in our regiments, and a very large number of English gentlemen had sufficient knowledge of the military art to be of good service in drilling the town lads and clodhoppers."

"What is the purchase system, grandpapa?"

"Oh, I'll tell you about that another time. It was the custom in the last century for officers in the army to purchase their promotion. As I was saying, there were plenty of officers to be found when they were wanted, and very speedily three large armies were advancing on London, which was still held by the enemy. You may imagine that the total stoppage of business in the capital, and its occupation by the enemy, were producing most appalling disasters and confusion. On the whole, I believe the invaders behaved civilly towards the Londoners, but of course they lived at free quarters, and took care to 'requisition' the place very liberally. They believed that England would be glad to purchase peace under any circumstances, and at any price, and they intended, I fancy, simply to hold the capital till we had agreed to their terms. I forget exactly what they were, but they were not agreeable, I remember. But the few weeks' respite which we thus obtained was of marvelous advantage to us, and the foreigners were astonished to find that armies were gradually gathering around them, and that England seemed to be rather taking spirit than losing it. In fact, their position suddenly became critical. They had kept their communications open at first through Worthing, where they had established a fortified camp, and had maintained a carefully guarded line across Sussex and Surrey to London.

"Now, the winds and waves which, on one or two occasions have been very kind to old England, had appeared, at this juncture of our history, quite to have deserted us, and to be bestowing their favors on the other

side. But at length a turn came, and some severe weather much troubled their fleet, and sent a few ships to be banged to pieces on our coast. And then our fleet, our dispersed ships, collected, and, taught by misfortune, went at them again. One of their principal vessels was blown to pieces by their own torpedoes, and, as two could play at that game, by which they had gained such an advantage before, and we, as I said before, had obtained experience by disaster, we managed altogether to pretty nearly destroy the whole lot of them; and our invaders found themselves isolated. The main body of them was in London, and another large force was near Worthing, which had had the mortification of observing the punishment of their fleet. Besides these, there were others, forming a sort of chain, in fortified positions between these two points. But remember, my boys, that I am talking of fifty years ago—it's difficult to remember all that took place. Ah! I remember in '71, there was that wonderful trial—the—the Tichborne—yes, that was the name—the Tichborne case, which turned a good deal upon memories of——"

"Never mind about that, grandpapa; tell us what you were doing yourself all this time, while the enemy were being beaten. We want to know about the notches on the sword."

"Don't be impatient; I'm coming to my own share of events as well as I can."

"You were an officer in the Militia, weren't you, grandpapa?"

"Yes, my boy; I had left Oxford a year or two be-

fore, and become a student-at-law in the Inner Temple. By the by, how different those places were in those days! The University of Oxford was still under the command of the grand old Church of England, and men became advocates without any test beyond payment of money, eating a certain number of dinners, and attending a few lectures—but the profession maintained its high character without educational tests. I was always a Conservative, and did my best to keep them as ———"

"Please, grandpa, tell us about Oxford and the Inner Temple another day; we want to hear about the fighting now."

"You young rascal! you ought to allow an old man to be a little discursive. Well, as I was saying, I was to be a lawyer, but my father made me a very good allowance, and I voted the law a nuisance. In fact, if I had had my own way I should have got a commission in the army; however, I did obtain the nearest thing to it, that is to say, a commission in the Militia. I obtained a lieutenantcy in one of the Middlesex regiments, and had been out for two or three annual trainings when these events occurred. Ah! the Militia then was not what it is now; we had all the material of good soldiers, but simply we had not sufficient time allowed us to learn our business. I got attached to a regiment of the line for a month, I remember, and had another month's drill in a school of instruction."

"Never mind about the school of instruction, grandpapa; we have too much of school when we are not at home for the holidays."

"Well, well! my regiment had not been in action in the defeat of Dorking; we had been ordered down to Dover to assist in checking the enemy at that point. But they had given us no trouble, having merely threatened that part of the coast, and then landed at Worthing. I remember no thought of submission ever entered our minds when we heard the enemy had forced their way through and over our troops. We feared the Government might be inclined to come to terms, but we believed the spirit of the nation to be sound at bottom. That reminds me that I must digress for a moment from the fighting which you are so anxious to come to, to tell you a little about the Government of the country and such matters. The Queen wanted to stick to Windsor Castle, and head her own armies in making a stand there; but the place was too near London, and she was persuaded to retire to her Highland Castle of Balmoral, for it was determined that the majesty of the realm should be kept in security. It was terrible that London should be in the hands of the enemy, but, after all, London was not England. And they had lost so many men in their first victories—for victories they undoubtedly were—that they felt themselves unable to advance further till they had been reinforced. Even that interval was sufficient to forward our preparations, and we speedily had an army in the neighborhood of Henley-on-Thames, another to the rear at Salisbury, and a third at Bedford. The Ministry, impelled perhaps by their old associations, for most of them were Oxford men, had established the Parliament in Oxford. That beautiful room, known by the name of the

Divinity School, with its delicate fan-traceried roof, was temporarily converted into the House of Lords; while the Commons took up their quarters in the Sheldonian Theatre, which gave them rather the appearance of a French Senate. In fact, the building called the 'Schools,' where King Charles had held his court in the seventeenth century, when he was compelled to quit London by the opposing political faction, was now the refuge of the Parliament of the nation, driven from London by a foreign invader. Oh, dear! oh, dear! it was a terrible national humiliation. Well, I believe that there was talk of submission amongst some members of the Government and amongst many members of Parliament. They said, 'We shall buy them out cheaper now than when they've overrun the whole country—war is an immoral institution, and behind the age—let us take warning by France, and not court absolute defeat by fighting to the death.' However, the more courageous councils prevailed. The old national spirit of England blazed the brighter as the gloom around us deepened. A vote was passed of want of confidence in the Government, and a coalition gave us a National Party, which saved the nation. By the by, it had a Minister for War, who possessed some practical acquaintance with the matters to which he was to administer, which was not the case in the Cabinet just ejected. But you boys don't care about these things; I must come to the fighting.

"As I was saying, we were at Dover; and though the news which we received there after the Battle of Dorking sounded deucedly—I mean, very—discouraging, we did

not talk of giving in, nevertheless. I remember we had a devilish—I mean an uncommonly good dinner, at the Lord Warden Hotel. The mess was composed of the officers of about four regiments—Volunteers and Militia. The men were billeted about the town. Beside these there was a regiment of regulars, with some Royal and Volunteer Artillery on the heights. The Lord Warden had plenty of space in it, so most of the officers had taken up their quarters there, and we had amalgamated our messes; and a very jolly time we had of it, though the enemy was advancing on London. Our business was to fight, not to weep; so we made the most of life while we were still permitted to live. We all agreed, I am sure, that *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, but meanwhile we might as well drink the best claret and champagne in the cellars of the Lord Warden as leave it to be guzzled by the invaders.

"On the night on which the news of the defeat came, the Line regiment was dining with us. I believe we officers of Militia rather looked down upon the Volunteers, and that the Line officers had a contempt for both, as soldiers. No professional man can be expected to respect an amateur; but we did not show any of it in our demeanor towards one another, but were all very sociable and convivial.

"The Volunteers were inclined, perhaps, to be depressed, for many of them were men of wealth, which might be appropriated, or with businesses which might be ruined; but the Linesmen were in the best of spirits. They had been long stagnating without promo-

tion in the dull round of garrison duties, and the chance of a fight made them as joyous as possible.

"'Beaten are we,' said our junior major, 'faith! it's a good augury; for didn't the French claim the advantage, on that occasion when the bullets whistled about the young prince, and did they not get the worst of it in every battle afterwards? So pass the decanters; and, Mr. President, try if you can find some fellow to give us a song, to cheer us up a little, and drive the dismals out of our heads for an hour or two.'

"But you must not think that we did our duty as officers only by drinking, singing, and shouting at mess. We were at company and battalion drills, musketry drill and practice, kit inspections, shelter trench exercise, and so forth all day, and earned our dinner very hardly. But we were not allowed to remain very long in this comparative quietude. We were sent among other regiments to take up a position near Tunbridge Wells. East Kent was as much unconquered as ever. It is said, you know, that when William of Normandy overran the rest of England, the courage of the men of the county of Kent—ever since called the men of Kent—barred his progress in their direction, and that they obtained their own terms in favour of the county of Kent before they agreed to yield allegiance to him; whence came the custom of gavel-kind, still preserved in the county. But I don't suppose you boys know or care anything about gavel-kind. Let me see, where was I? ah! at Tunbridge Wells, where it has been determined to form lines to stop any progress of the invader towards Kent.

"This, then, was the position of parties—about two hundred thousand armed foreigners were on British soil, holding in their possession the metropolis and a tract of country lying between it and the central part of the sea-coast of Sussex. About five hundred thousand armed Englishmen prevented them from advancing beyond these positions, having gradually drawn a sort of circle round them, on the western borders of Sussex and Surrey, at Reading, Hertford, and in Epping Forest; and, lastly, between Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks in Kent. The English fleet had cut off their communications with their own country, many of our war ships having now returned from foreign stations; and they were constantly lessening their numbers while the British armies were as constantly increasing. Yet the discipline of the army of the invaders was so perfect as compared with that of the half-drilled and hastily-recruited British armies that we did not dare to attempt to drive them into the sea without further hesitation, as we felt that we ought, with our numbers, to have been able to have done.

"Our fleet now held possession of the Channel, but the hope of the invader lay in the fact that the combined fleets of the two great powers were again advancing, and the defeat of our own fleet, which could not equal the two in numbers, would be followed by the pouring into England of further swarms of hardy warriors. Our Government was perfectly aware of the superior strength of the united fleets of the foreigners, still it was hoped that the English sailors could, at all events, keep them at bay. Meanwhile, it was determined to cut off the communica-

tions between the invaders' troops in London and those in Sussex and Surrey. If not reinforced, it was thought that they must speedily capitulate. Only some fifty thousand men held London, but they were very difficult to dislodge. They had taken up their position on the northern bank of the river, from the Tower of London to the Houses of Parliament, constituting Park Lane and Oxford Street their western and northern lines, with barricades of great strength erected across our comparatively narrow streets, and the approaches commanded by cannon and mitrailleuses; it was exceedingly difficult to force their positions, and they were provisioned for some weeks. The greater part of the respectable inhabitants of London had fled into the country, carrying with them their valuables in the shape of money and jewels, and less weighty articles; but the invaders had found splendid opportunities of plunder notwithstanding.

"Now, it had occurred to the enemy, that if they could get the county of Kent into their possession, with its extent of sea-coast and commanding fortifications at Chatham, they would be able to keep their communications open, and hold a position from which it might be exceedingly difficult to dislodge them. From their spies—for we English have always been much too open-hearted to take precautions against foreigners obtaining what information they liked about us—they were accurately informed respecting our strength in this part of Kent. In fact, it was the weakest of all the armies which opposed the foe. We had in all not more than forty-five thousand men when the enemy moved some fifty thousand from his

position at Horsham, in Sussex, towards Tunbridge Wells. Our task was to hold our position in that locality, while our army, which had been concentrated on the western side of Surrey, should turn his flank in the neighborhood of Reigate, and so create a diversion in our favor. Meanwhile, another of our armies was to break through his line between Horsham and Worthing, so that he would be divided into three distinct bodies. But all this we knew afterwards. All we knew at the time was that we were to hold our position, and that he was advancing in great force against us. This information we obtained from country people, also from the reconnaissances of our Yeomanry Cavalry, who acted admirably as Uhlans during the war, after they and their horses had got over their first difficulties from lack of proper training; but the enemy was very wary in his movements. Ah! it seemed very strange to be engaged in warlike preparations amid the smiling landscapes of Kent—to be temporarily without railway or telegraphic communication with the Metropolis—to be suddenly thrown back, as it were, a couple of centuries—for we were very proud, in those days, of the improvements which had been recently effected in our railway and telegraphing systems.

"But, let me see. Where was I? At Tunbridge Wells, I think. Yes, well, the head-quarters of our army were at Tunbridge Wells. The general and his staff occupied the Calverley Hotel, and the officers and men were distributed in the neighborhood, partly in houses, partly under canvas, the officers having usually formed messes at the hotels or country inns. Provisions were sufficiently

plentiful, for we had the whole of Kent to draw upon, and the farmers' carts were actively employed in bringing up provender. The roads in Kent were good, and if there was a little confusion occasionally, they generally managed to extricate themselves without much bother. Now, what rendered Tunbridge Wells especially interesting to me was, that your grandmother lived at a pretty village called Frant, situated at about two miles from Tunbridge Wells, with her two old maiden aunts. They dwelt in a charming cottage covered with creepers, and commanding a delightful view over Eridge Park, the property of the Earl of Abergavenny. Your grandmamma was at that time a beautiful and graceful girl of nineteen, and she lived with these two old aunts and their cat and dog.

"However, all this has nothing to do with the fighting; but it seemed marvelously romantic to me, at the time, to be actually under arms and at the same instant making love. I am not sure that she had altogether reciprocated the ardor of my attachment; but the sight of me in scarlet and silver, with a clanging steel-scabbarded sword at my side, and my moustache as fiercely curled as it was in its nature to be, made an evident impression on her. But I think that neither she nor the old ladies quite realized the fact that a battle might actually take place at or about Tunbridge Wells. It was such a retired, peaceful, pleasant neighborhood. It had been principally inhabited for so many years by quiet old ladies with Low Church tendencies. It had been so essentially a place for steady-going, comfortably-living, peace-loving folk, that it was

difficult to imagine it could become a battle-field. We and another Militia regiment messed at the Sussex Hotel, opposite the Old Parade, with its quaint little arcade, and mineral springs at one end—so suggestive of the days of bag-wigs and brocaded petticoats, minuets and country-dances in the old assembly-rooms in the evenings, and promenading up and down the pantiles in the morning, to drink the waters to the sound of hautboys and violins. But I am digressing again.

"It was on the 5th of September, rather more than three weeks after the Battle of Dorking, that we learned from our scouts that the enemy were advancing to attack us; and it appeared probable that an engagement would take place on the morrow. I confess that I felt myself turning pale as the colonel made this announcement to us; but I fancy that most of us felt ourselves turning pale, and experiencing a general sinking of the system, so that nobody noticed anybody else. In fact, I don't mind confessing that I was in what you boys would call a funk; but I did my duty the next day notwithstanding.

"We had a parade in the evening, and found not a man absent from his post, except those under the doctor's hands; and even some few had rallied from their sicknesses. We had a careful inspection of rifles, ammunition, and kits; and then let the men retire to their quarters and take a good supper. I took advantage of my first leisure to run up to Frant. There I found your grandmother quietly practising the piano, and her aunts employed at their knitting. The cat was reposing placidly on the window sill, and the dog was lying on the

mat of the front door; and being by this time accustomed to my military equipment, received me with wags of the tail, and the bark of welcome. Most of the inhabitants of Tunbridge Wells had deserted their houses, and betaken themselves, with such of their effects as they could transport, into the interior of Kent; but here were these ladies seeming utterly unmoved by events around them. Their house and garden, and the village of Frant, looked the same as ever, and the mere fact that they saw military uniforms about did not bring the sense of danger home to their minds. They had been accustomed to behold troopers of the West Kent Yeomanry riding through the place, and were not alarmed at the appearance of warlike preparation. They were both rather stout, comfortable-looking bodies, a little like your grandmother is now, and they apparently looked upon the whole affair of the invasion as nonsense. In fact, I believe they regarded it as mere newspaper information, and not more likely to effect themselves than any of the other horrible or heart-rending accounts which they perused in the 'Illustrated London News,' and the 'Tunbridge Wells Gazette,' which journals constituted their vehicles of information as to passing events of the day.

"'How well you look!' said one of them to me. 'It's from the exercise of hurrying up the hill,' I replied. 'And how smart you are to-day, in your full uniform,' said the other. I informed them that we were under arms now, and that though I did not wish to alarm them, I had better tell them the truth—that the enemy were expected to advance against Tunbridge Wells on the

morrow, and that a pitched battle might be confidently expected; and I finished my oration by recommending that they should fly somewhere while there was yet time.

"'But where are we to fly to?' asked the aunts; and as I could not give them any positive information on that point, they averred their intention of stopping where they were, saying that they did not think it likely that the enemy would come to Frant.

"I believe that they fancied no harm could happen to Frant, on the same principle that so many people refused to believe that any harm could happen to England—that the sacred, sea-girt isle, the home of the free, and all that sort of thing, could actually be trampled upon by an invader. So the end of it was that we had tea, and your grandmother played upon the piano, and sang songs suggestive of the peaceful delights of love-making, or the tranquil sorrow summoned to the heart by some tender memory of the past, just as if nothing was expected to happen. I once or twice alluded to the danger to which I was likely to be exposed on the morrow, but my remarks seemed to make little impression, even in the quarter in which I certainly did expect sympathy. Indeed, I began to think that I had better give up any hope of expecting any sympathy whatever in that desired quarter. As I buckled my sword-belt round my waist, however, before taking my departure, I noticed that she gave a sudden start, and that tears glistened in her eyes; then I felt that somebody would regret my loss if I fell on the morrow.

"I returned to Tunbridge Wells and slept soundly in the small room which I had been fortunate enough to secure at the Sussex Hotel; but, at about five o'clock the next morning, I was awakened by the reveillée—a lively piece of music played on the drums and fifes—and by bugle-calls sounding in every direction. We hurriedly breakfasted on coffee and cold meats, with the zealous appetites of men who are not quite certain when they will obtain their next meal, and were soon ready for action. I carried a small but sufficiently effective revolver pistol at my belt, and wore a haversack over my shoulder, which was well stuffed with cartridges and tobacco. Two pocket-handkerchiefs, a paper of ham-sandwiches, two briar-root pipes, and a brandy flask, formed the principal items in the remainder of my equipment. We wore crimson silk sashes at that time, in the army and militia, over the left shoulder, and carried our swords in steel scabbards, trailing on the ground from their long sling belts. The uniform coat was too scanty to be perfectly adapted for campaigning, and the little silver-laced chacos were not particularly ornamental, and were essentially the reverse of useful; they were not actually heavy, but they were constructed in such a fashion that what weight there was in them pressed upon the forehead.

"However, we made the best of such matters, and, indeed, did not give much attention to them. The mind ceases to be occupied by trifles when great matters are in hand. I must confess again that I felt as if I looked pale. I had a peculiar indescribable sort of feeling: I had experienced something not unlike it on the mornings

of the *viva voce* days in the examinations at Oxford. Indeed, I think I must confess that my sensations again partook very much of the nature of what is called fear; though I certainly believe that I felt less alarm than I had upon the occasions of these Oxford examinations. On the whole, I would, even now, prefer rather to meet an enemy with a rifle and bayonet in his hand, than to encounter an examiner with a pile of books in front of him, out of which he was prepared to tear my brains to bits. Bodily torture is hard to bear, but mental torture is harder.

"The Old Parade at Tunbridge Wells has witnessed some gay scenes in its day. But it never saw any scene like that presented to its notice on this September morning. It was in truth a scene exceedingly ill adapted to the *genius loci*, which was entirely peaceful, and suggestive of pale invalids walking slowly up and down to digest the chalybeate waters, or of encounters of wit between visitors, happy at their release from the dissipations of the town-season, which had begun to pall upon their mental constitutions, while injuring their bodily health. It was a place never intended to be filled with brilliant uniforms and waving plumes, the loud strains of a clanging military band, and the clank of sabres. Those old pantiles were adapted to the smart taps of the high-heeled shoe of the eighteenth century, or the high-heeled ladies' boot of the nineteenth. They were never intended for clinking spurs and the ponderous tread of tightly-buttoned warriors. But I am digressing again. We paraded on the Common, in much the same order as if we were merely parad-

ing for a review, except that the men had their white haversacks on, stuffed with bread and cheese, tobacco, and other necessaries; for we had become wiser in our military generation, and no longer neglectful of the commissariat. In every direction could be seen other battalions—scarlet, invisible green and gray—going through the same process. We carefully inspected the clothing, accoutrements, rifles, and ammunition, and, lastly, but not least, the haversacks of the men. The captain then ordered me to tell off the company as usual—that is to say, to number them, and divide them into half companies and sections, and see that they could correctly form fours; in fact, to ascertain that they were capable of taking their place as a component part of the battalion. The reports were then collected by the adjutant, and not a man declared to be absent who ought to have been present. Meanwhile the scene was very exhilarating. The bands were playing lively airs, the bayonets were glancing in the sunshine, staff and field-officers' horses were prancing, and a bright-eyed country girl, who was standing near my companion with some few other country people, mostly with baskets on their arms, smiled so encouragingly upon us that I felt we were destined to achieve greatness on that day. It occurred to me then that the greatness might be purchased at the expense of my humble self amongst others, or by the loss of a limb or two. This made me momentarily melancholy; and the distracting thought of your grandmother coming up into my head from my heart, where it was lying in ambush, so to speak, increased my melancholy for another moment. 'I

wonder if she will weep for me if I am killed,' I was just saying to myself, thinking of the tears in her eyes when I bade her good-bye, when the thrilling music of the bugles rang out in the clear air, and I took my place in the rear of my company.

"'Quarter column on number one!' was the word of command, and we closed up the companies to within six paces' distance of one another, and the colonel addressed a few words to us. 'Officers and men of the——Royal Middlesex Militia,' he said to us, or words to this effect—for you can't expect me to remember the exact words he used—'Officers and men of the——Royal Middlesex Militia, it is expected that we shall be engaged with the enemy to-day; I needn't tell you to do your duty, because I'm sure you are prepared to do that without any words of mine; what I want to say to you is this: keep your ears open for the word of command, and trust to your officers; keep the ranks closed up, and don't fire without you've taken a proper aim; officers, especially look to it that the men don't throw away their ammunition.'

"Just as the gallant colonel arrived at this point, a plumed staff-officer galloped up to him and said something. The colonel nodded; 'Shoulder arms!' he shouted; 'fours, right; left wheel; march off by companies in succession from the leading company;' and, with the band playing the old tune of 'The Girl I left Behind me,' off we marched to battle. I contemplated with pride our old colors fluttering in the breeze. They bore the word 'Mediterranean' emblazoned on them, for the

regiment had formed part of the garrison of Corfu in the Crimean war; and though they could chronicle no regular victory, the regiment had done good service in Ireland in or about the year 1798. The exhilarating influences of the whole scene had routed fear from my heart, and I stepped along as lightly as if I had been going to a review, with a brilliant mess dinner and ball to come off afterwards. In fact, I stepped along so lightly and gaily that I walked into one of the prickly furze-bushes with which Tunbridge Wells Common abounds. This suddenly recalled me to myself. 'Confound it,' I said, 'if the prickles of a furze-bush can hurt like this, what will it be to get amongst a lot of bayonets?'

"We crossed the Common towards Mount Ephraim, as the highest part of Tunbridge Wells is called, the name, not unsuitable to the temper of the place, being, I presume, a legacy of the old Puritan days. A battery of field artillery thundered along the road just as our drum-major, at the head of the regiment, arrived at it; and, as the colonel halted the regiment, I was enabled, by a brief glance, to get an idea of the whole scene. Tunbridge Wells, with its groves and wide extent of open heath, its white villas, and trim gardens, had been converted by a wave of the blood-red wand of the Demon of war, into a field of Mars. In every direction bayonets were glistening, artillery frowning, and cavalry sabres glittering. Along the road which runs throughout the length of Mount Ephraim, and eventually joins the London road, battery after battery of artillery was rumbling, the drivers cracking their whips, the officers waving their

swords, and the grim gunners seated on the guns, with their arms folded in composure which looked terrible from its firmness. It was the dark calm before the storm. Along a road to the right a brigade of cavalry were defiling, and I recognized in the distance the smart Hussar equipment of the West Kent Yeomanry Cavalry, and the neat dark uniforms of the East Kent Mounted Rifles.

"To the left I could see nothing but a moving forest of bayonets as far as my eyes could reach over the undulating ground. The red uniforms of Old England were mingled with the dark or light gray costumes of the modern rifle brigades. Staff-officers in their gay cocked hats were scampering about in every direction, and I could see the staff itself, riding slowly along in the direction of Rusthall Common; the old general being distinguishable by the plumes on his cocked hat, which were larger in the case of a general than any ordinary staff-officer. A wild mixture of martial music—brass bands, and drums and fifes—was borne upon the breeze, varied by an occasional trumpet or bugle-call. But vast as this host seemed to me, I knew that it only consisted of about eighteen thousand men, being the left wing of our army. The centre and headquarters were at the little village of Southborough, between Tunbridge Wells and Tunbridge, while the right was at about twelve miles' distance, at Seven-oaks. The whole country was so intersected with roads and hedges, and so full of woodlands and farmsteads, that anything like parade manœuvres would probably be entirely out of the question; and it occurred to me that the excellent shooting of our Volunteers, on such country, ought to

render them equal to the veterans of the enemy. We officers had been ordered to provide ourselves with maps of the district; and it seemed to me that the fine high road which now ran throughout the extent of our front, was invaluable to us. Of course in my humble position as a lieutenant I could not tell what was going on except in my immediate neighborhood, but a staff officer hurriedly gave us this information, and I had obtained from the plateau of Mount Ephraim, as I have said, a good notion of the extent of my own division of the army. 'Quick march,' said the colonel, and leading the way on his brown horse, he crossed the road and took us through the gates leading to the grounds of a fine mansion in the classical style of architecture—let me see, its name was—bless me! I ought to know its name. However, I remember that it presented a deserted and desolate appearance. At the back was a garden sloping down towards fields and woodlands, and altogether constituting a very commanding position; and this we were evidently to hold. To our left I could distinguish through the trees a battery of artillery just brought into position.

"Was the enemy supposed to be near then, I wondered. I saw that some sappers had taken possession of the house, and by boarding up the lower windows, and knocking loopholes through the walls in places, were evidently intending to make it an Haye Sainte of the battle of Tunbridge Wells.

"I allude to the chateau La Haye Sainte, which was contested by such hard fighting at Waterloo, which you have of course read about—it was considered what is

called in military parlance the key to a position; and it seemed that this house was held in similar estimation. In fact, all the houses along Mount Ephraim were being converted into temporary fortifications, sufficiently effective against musketry, though, of course, incapable of sustaining a single canon ball or bomb shell. But the country below and beyond this line of villas was so thickly wooded, that it was almost impossible to bring artillery to play against them, except by executing regular siege operations. The house which we were occupying was a much more imposing edifice than any of the others, and stood further back from the high road—in advance of the others so far as regarded the quarter from which we were likely to be assailed. Our men were ordered to pile arms in the garden, and then set to work in making a kind of rough *chevaux de frise* or breastwork along the garden fence; inserting sharpened stakes in the ground, and filling up the interstices with fascines—that is to say, bundles of faggots—till the whole formed a very formidable barrier.

"The day was delightfully soft and warm, showery weather during the past week having rendered the air pure and fresh as your grandmother used to look in her light muslin dress in the morning. Many of us lighted our pipes while superintending or actually employed in these defensive operations. Altogether it was difficult to believe that we were not engaged in preparations for some pleasant festivity; but I happened to come across our assistant surgeon who was parading his instruments on a garden seat. 'Getting ready for you,' he said, with

a significant smile, to which I endeavored to respond with one of pleasantry and indifference. But I confess that the old uncomfortable feeling had returned; and I could have fancied myself in gown and white tie, about to be delivered over to the tender mercies of the examiners to whom I have once or twice alluded.

"But what with the sunshine slanting across the garden, and throwing it into alternate masses of cheerful brilliance and pensive gloom, and the gay appearance of the crowd of red-coats standing or lounging about—for the rifles were still stacked together with their sharp shining bayonets pointing towards the heaven that looked so loving and tender, and the men were allowed to be at their ease—altogether I say, the scene was not one in which doleful apprehensions could be long entertained. But as I lighted my pipe, the idea again ascended from my heart to my head, that I should have preferred to have been wandering about that delicious garden with only your grandmother to keep me company. Suddenly I saw the colonel speak to the bugler who had been keeping near him, and the latter sounded the assembly. 'Our outposts have been driven in,' said my captain to me, as we took our places at the piled arms belonging to our company; and the men formed up preparatory to unpiling them. He was a fine fellow, was the captain of my company, and though only a Militiaman. I doubt whether many regiments of the Line could have produced a better soldier. Six feet in height, and with the fresh blonde complexion and light red hair, which are such distinguishing marks of the English aristocracy, he was as so-

tive as any of the little, sharp Londoners whom he commanded, though they were rarely above five feet six, and did not average more than five feet five. Besides serving his country in the Militia, he had obtained recruits for it in the shape of three handsome boys, who were at present with their mother at Teddington, on the banks of the Thames, where the captain occupied a very pleasant and commodious old house.

"Crack, crack! was heard among the distant woods towards the west, followed by a continued dropping fire of small-arms, varied by an occasional roll, as if a company or half-company had fired a volley. The game had evidently begun. We all stood to our arms in silence; and I do not think that I was the only one who felt that he was in the presence of the examiners. Ah! it was the searching examination of Fate which we were to undergo. Meanwhile, the preparations for the defence of the house, and the strengthening of the outwork of the garden, had been completed, and we were drawn up on the smooth undulating lawn, without respect to the flower-beds, in two lines; that is to say, in half-battalions.

"The dropping fire continued; but before us the scene looked tranquil in sylvan beauty, and as yet no other evidence of the bloody work which had been commenced was presented to our senses. Some wreaths of light-blue smoke curled up above the trees, but they blended peacefully with the deep blue of the calm of heaven.

"As we stood expectant, an aid-de-camp galloped in the garden, his horse's hoofs making deep dents in the soft turf, and communicated some order to the colonel.

"'Numbers one, two, and three will skirmish" ordered the colonel. 'four, five, and six will support; the remaining companies will form the reserve.'

"My own company was numbered two in the regiment, which consisted of some nine hundred men, divided into ten companies. Defiling through the narrow gateway left in the breastwork, we opened out into skirmishing order, with about three paces' distance between the men, and advanced cautiously through the trees, clambering over or breaking down the hedges in places. And now the rattle of musketry became continuous, and presently the booming of heavy guns betokened that the storm, which had been so long lowering, had commenced in earnest. Yet still my own share seemed a wild romance, rather than reality. I had seen no enemy. I had only been amongst the delightful verdure of a thoroughly English landscape. The sense of fear had now been lost in the whirl and excitement, and I began to long to be at the hated invader. My occupation consisted in keeping the men of my half-company together, and in taking care that they made use of the advantages of cover offered by the trees and inequalities of the ground, and did not rashly expose themselves as living targets to the enemy. Suddenly an open space of wild heath, opening amid the woods, exposed him to our view. I saw the sun shining on helmet-spikes above a hedge, which extended along the opposite side of the open ground. Some of our men had shown themselves, and flashes of fire, accompanied by puffs of smoke, had their fearful result in some three or four being stretched writhing on the turf.

"'Keep to your cover, men,' shouted the captain; and slinking behind the tree-trunks and bushes, our fellows returned the fire at the hedge, but without any result that I could discern. After a further interchange of shots without much apparent result, we suddenly saw the helmet-spikes emerging from a wood upon the right, and, at the same time, our bugles in the rear sounded the retreat; in fact, the enemy had made an attack in great force, along the whole line, and it was necessary to withdraw the skirmishers, and retire behind our defences; for we were outnumbered.

"Dragging a few of our wounded with us, and leaving some gallant young Londoners dead upon the field, we retreated, still firing from behind the trees, at the puffs of smoke which we saw through the interstices. But they took every advantage of the cover, and we could make little better than chance shots. Presently, at the command of the captain, we closed and ran in behind the breast-work. And now we found that the enemy were pressing through the wood. Shots rattled amongst the stakes and earth and branches which composed our fortifications, and appeared at first somewhat to discompose our fellows. 'Steady men, steady!' said the colonel, walking along our line on foot, while his horse was held by an orderly in the rear. And there we lay, for a time that seemed to me interminable, receiving the shots, and firing in return, but unable to discern whether our aim was followed by any results. And now for a minute or two a dreadful sense of danger oppressed my spirits, as if I had suddenly found myself among the horrors of an

earthquake. The uproar of big and small guns became eternal, and clouds of smoke obscured the sunshine. One or two men fell beside me with ghastly wounds. One poor fellow seemed to have half his face blown away, as he fell, a hideous object, covered with gore. Another, as he rolled over, convulsively tore open his coat, and displayed a shirt which seemed to gush with blood. But our brave captain walked down the ranks, as the men lay crouching behind the breastwork, calm and smiling, and kept them in their places; though the recollection of the recruits for the country at home must occasionally have intruded upon his mind. I, in my turn, became cool and confident, and with my sword in my right hand and my revolver in my left, I went about directing the men's firing as well as I was able. Suddenly from the wood that stretched at an angle towards our position on the right, I saw a rush of dark warriors, with their officers in front waving them on with their swords. At a steady run they ascended the slope and charged at our breastwork. But they were now close to the muzzles of our rifles, and numbers tumbled back. Still they came on, appearing to issue from the wood in swarms, and it was evident that they intended to storm our position. And I must confess that our men appeared to be funked, as I expressed it just now, by the valor, steadiness, and energy of their veteran adversaries. They seemed inclined to run. But we rallied them, and still we fired from behind the barrier, and showed a stalwart *chevaux de frise* of bayonets wherever their attempts to surmount the obstacles in their path met with partial success.

"Here were no parade movements, and no opportunities for using the long-distance sights of our rifles. It was an old-fashioned, close quarter's affair of bayonets, and muzzle to muzzle. I shot down one man with my revolver, and cut down another who was surmounting the *chevaux de frise*, and I saw my men thrust back several with their bayonets, inflicting, not without receiving, those dreadful wounds which the bayonet can give. But presently, through the din of voices, clash of arms, and dense smoke which now curtained the scene, I saw that the enemy had effected a lodgment, and that we were being driven back. They were evidently too strong for us, and we must make a stand within the house itself, which two companies already occupied. We must now have fallen into great confusion but for the coolness of our colonel and other of the officers. The enemy's bullets were rattling like hail-stones among our closed ranks, and they were pushing on with the bayonet. My own company, however, and another, opposed our bayonets firmly to their own, while the remaining companies retreated within the house, and finally covered our own retreat by an ably-sustained fire from the upper windows. But this was not effected without our suffering considerable loss. Bodies were now heaped across the lawn and flower-beds, and the scene had become one of unmitigated horror. The ghastly dead and groaning, bleeding wounded; the savage, grimy, gore besmirched combatants, and the smoke which shrouded everything, and through which flashes of flame were continually darting—all combined to render the scene appalling. But I had quite lost all sense

of terror now. A wild demoniac feeling had possessed me, yet I was calm, and almost gloated with delight over the fearful spectacle which surrounded me. Ah! this was war indeed; such as I had imagined in my waking dreams but never thought to have beheld in England!

"And now ensued a fierce conflict for possession of the house. Fortunately for us the enemy could bring no cannon to bear upon us or we should have been destroyed in an instant; but they maintained a tremendous fire of musketry against our windows, keeping themselves meanwhile as much out of sight as possible behind the trees and shrubs of the garden and outhouses of the stable-yard. They greatly outnumbered us, and their bullets did much execution upon us, especially through the lower windows.

"Meanwhile, we could see swarms of the enemy still emerging from the wood. It was evident that they considered this a most important position, and that they were bent upon capturing it. We were as firmly resolved to defend it to the death. I now reloaded my revolver, and wiped the perspiration from my face and brow. But though under shelter comparatively, the house was by no means safe, and we presently saw that they were dragging a piece of artillery up the steep slope. All that we could do was to prevent the men from firing away their ammunition too carelessly and rapidly from their breechloaders, and to instruct them to take certain aim. I saw my captain take one of the men's rifles, and fire with cool deliberation upon a mounted officer, who momentarily exposed himself from behind a clump of

laurels. He fell, and his horse started wildly away; but before the captain could return the rifle to the soldier, a bullet struck him on the chest, and he fell himself into the arms of his old pay-sergeant, who was behind him. I was immediately at his side, for death seemed written on his features. He seemed to struggle to speak to me, for he wanted probably to give a last message to the wife and boys in the pleasant dwelling at Teddington; but the blood welled up in his throat, and choked him. I had no time to pause and mourn, for the enemy had at last got a gun into position; our situation seemed to be growing desperate, and, as I was now in command of my company, I could afford to waste no time in useless lamentation, even over the dearest friend. But at that instant we heard a wild British shout. There had been a lull in the firing, and a passing breeze had cleared the air. We saw a battalion of gray-coated Volunteers charging into the garden in column of companies, the broadest formation which the nature of the ground permitted. The gun was hurriedly turned upon them, but they had captured it before it could be fired, and the enemy were driven back in confusion. They rallied, however, and again the steadiness of the veteran soldiers seemed to prevail, for though the Volunteers faced them with noble courage, they could not thrust them from their position. But now our colonel ordered a sortie, and throwing open all the doors and lower windows, we rushed forth by companies, and, forming as accurately as possible, went at them in flank; and happy I was to be out of the house, although the exposure to red-hot lead

and cold steel was greater, for the place was bursting into flames in several directions, and we had no means of extinguishing them.

"The Volunteers saw that we had come, and, with renewed shouts, they charged home. We seconded them well, and the enemy turned and fled precipitately down the slope. But, to do him justice, he soon rallied. We saw the officers stopping the men with the greatest coolness, and, by the time they had reached the shelter of the wood, they were again forming up to renew the attack. But our fight had won little besides honor. We had been outflanked on the left of our line towards Rusthall, and a bare-headed staff-officer, with his horse covered with blood and foam, rode up to our colonel and the commanding officer of the Volunteers, and they forthwith commenced to withdraw us from the scene of action. We formed up lines of half battalions facing the enemy, and, while thus keeping them at bay, retired by companies in succession from the right in rear of the left. The old general and his staff had watched the admirable coolness with which this manœuvre was executed.

"'Gad, colonel,' he said to our commanding officer, 'the smartest regiment of the Line couldn't have done that movement better.'

"We now retreated across the Common till we obtained shelter below some rising ground, for the enemy had managed to bring a battery of artillery into position, near the church of Rusthall, which commanded a great part of the Common.

"We were now halted, and had time to breathe quiet-

ly. I could scarcely credit the fact that I had escaped unscathed through such a fight; but I found that my chaco and coat exhibited proofs that my escape had been by what is termed a shave; and garments, hands, and face, were all somewhat smeared with blood. But we had come forth from the ordeal with much less loss than I should have supposed possible, though about a hundred of our brave fellows must have been left behind; and many of those present had slight fresh wounds, which their comrades now assisted them to bind up. Meanwhile, some rather rough ambulance wagons, which had been improvised, were in attendance upon the wounded at the scene of action.

"The enemy had been deterred, by the fear of being outflanked by our army, which lay between Tunbridge and Reigate, from advancing in that direction, and had concentrated his chief attack upon Tunbridge Wells. And our general had therefore sent for the troops at Sevenoaks to join us, and it was reported that they were in full march. As soon as they were near enough to act with us, it was intended to endeavor to drive the enemy from the position which he had won along Mount Ephraim and Rusthall. For half an hour or so the firing ceased, and by common consent, apparently, an armistice was enjoyed by both armies; which was employed in looking after the wounded, and consuming the provisions with which we had been supplied. But the interval of repose was allowed to be but brief. Again aides-de-camp galloped about, and our army took up a fresh position on the Common. Our artillery, which had been forced to

retreat before the masses of infantry, brought up under the shelter of the woods, took up a position on hilly parts of the Common, from which the enemy's guns at Rusthall could be answered, and our battalions of infantry and squadrons of cavalry were formed up in the valleys between them. Soon a general assault was commenced. The artillery thundered again, and the infantry scrambled over furze-bushes, fences, hedgerows, and walls, to get at the enemy; while the cavalry made a brilliant charge down the high road, which unfortunately terminated in half their saddles being emptied by the fire from a masked battery of mitrailleuses. The uproar of the firing from large and small guns became deafening. Masses of smoke overhung the whole scene, and it became difficult to know where one was going. But we stumbled on, pausing to take advantage of shelter and firing, then pushing on again, over hedges and ditches, through gardens and enclosures, to get at them. One trampled over furze or gooseberry bushes without noticing their stings, and had begun to regard the shower of bullets as little more than a hailstorm. But I am rather afraid that mine was the courage of desperation, for I had, indeed, by this time, given myself up for lost, and ceased to care what became of me. I only strove to do my duty to the end of this fearful day; and I may say, with thankfulness, that I believe I did do it. I believe that I kept my company together, for I was now commanding it, as coolly as if on parade, and that I led them to the assault without losing a single precious moment by blunders or delay; but I must not be too egotistical. Below the elevation upon

which the church of Rusthall was erected, were two lines of large handsome villas. These were now in posession of our fellows, but were rapidly falling into ruins from the withering fire from the height above, while their once beautiful gardens were trampled into chaotic wildernesses. Nearly in front of the church was a large white house, standing in picturesque grounds which sloped down the hill, and from every window in this a terrific fire of musketry was maintained, while a battery of artillery on the terrace below was belching forth its devastating flames and smoke with most disagreeable pertinacity. But onwards and upwards we pressed; over and through the lawns, flower-beds, and shrubberies of the sloping garden we scrambled, sometimes almost on our hands and knees, with the bullets rattling about us and cutting off twigs and leaves in such a continued shower as to render me exceedingly thankful for their shelter. But the bullets managed to find their way to many of us, and the line of our assent was marked by our unfortunate comrades. I quite forgot that under ordinary circumstances I should have been out of breath, and I pushed through a little fir wood, and charged at the low church-yard wall at the summit of the hill without feeling 'blown,' as you boys would say. How I got over I don't exactly know; but I remember cutting down a stout fellow, whose bayonet missed my chest, and went through the fleshy part of my left arm. Then I found myself actually crossing swords with an officer, and two ideas came into my head; firstly, that this form of combat was antique and romantic; secondly, that I might with advantage have taken a few

more lessons in fencing. But before he had time to run me through the body—as I rather think he might have done, for I did not find my regulation sword easy to handle in such an encounter—he was shot through the head. Almost simultaneously a bullet grazed my ribs, and, as a parting legacy from a retiring foe, I received a blow on the head from the butt end of a rifle, which laid me senseless on what had been the peaceful green mounds of the churchyard. My chaco somewhat broke the force of the blow, and there was just time for the thought to come into my mind that I was killed, before I fell stunned.

"When I recovered my senses again, I saw around me a strange and fearful scene. Amongst the pale tombstones, and crosses, and grassy mounds of the churchyard were heaped corpses in various and horrible attitudes of death—the English and foreign uniforms being closely intermingled. The sun, setting amongst red, and black, and golden clouds, threw a lurid hue over their pallid and blood-stained countenances. The parting rays became more rosy in their effulgence, as the sun sank behind a cloud, and it seemed as though a halo of glory was cast over them—corpses below the green mound, corpses above them; the churchyard converted into an open charnel-house: it was very ghastly. I tried to rise, but could not. Was I mortally wounded? I felt that my side was hurt, and I found, as I pulled open my coat, that my shirt was clotted with blood. But it seemed to be a mere scratch, and the slight wound in my arm was of no consequence either; in fact, the reason which prevented my rising was that a corpse lay across my feet—a corpse

with the lower part of its face mangled—and—but I must not indulge you boys with too much of the horrible—I found, to my great satisfaction, that I could rise, but my head had a tremendous bump on one side, and felt heavy as lead. I picked up my sword, which had fallen from my hand as I became insensible, and proceeded to search for my regiment. There were many others wounded who seemed to be endeavoring to arise, or looking for assistance; and I was happy to see a military surgeon, accompanied by two or three civilian surgeons and a number of ambulance corps volunteers arrive upon the ground. A few strips of sticking-plaster were a sufficient remedy for my hurts, and I was now informed that the enemy had been driven back along the whole line, and some very brilliant charges had been made, and hard fighting shown by the three branches of the service—Regulars, Militia, and volunteers.

"A terrific struggle had taken place for the house to which I alluded, standing near the church; while my own regiment had struggled upwards through its grounds, leaving the house to the right, and had captured the churchyard. Savage hand-to-hand fighting had taken place amongst the shrubberies and conservatories surrounding the house, and finally within its rooms. Bayonet thrusts had been exchanged over rosewood tables, pistol shots had been dodged behind pianos, and heavy china vases had been employed with good effect as missiles. Cut off from their comrades, and seeing themselves hopelessly surrounded, those of the enemy who had taken refuge in the upper rooms of the house, and barricaded

the staircases, at length surrendered. It was discovered that they had made excellent use of their time, and accomplished a very successful assault on a remarkably well-stocked wine cellar. One or two dead bodies were afterwards found in the cucumber frames, fearfully gashed by the broken glass, and in other extraordinary situations.

"I was also told that a very well-contested action had been fought at long-bowls, as I heard a soldier express it; that is to say, by artillery and rifles, without the combatants approaching within some hundred yards of one another, amongst the corn-fields, hop-gardens and copses of the valley of the Medway. But at Tunbridge Wells, such had been the nature of the ground, that we had combated in the antiquated style which I have attempted to describe.

"A sharp Tunbridge Wells donkey boy, who had brought his peaceful beast here, under the sensible impression that he might be rendered useful—as indeed he speedily was, for I saw a wounded man laid across his back to be carried off—informed me of the whereabouts of a regiment, which seemed, from his description, to be my own. I accordingly bent my somewhat feeble steps in that direction. Crossing the wild heath of Rusthall, and avoiding some sickening corpses of men and horses which lay in my way, and one miserable animal moaning and rolling his eyes in agony, as he lay in a pool of his own blood, I descended a path which led downwards amongst some picturesque formations of sand-rock, and suddenly came upon a scene worthy of the pencil of a Salvator Rosa. In a romantic little dell, formed by the

sand-rocks on one side, and a group of ruined, blackened cottages on the other—some of which were still smoking, as if but recently burnt—I found my regiment bivouacked.

"Every available space of rock and ground was occupied by the gallant Militiamen, lounging in every conceivable attitude of fatigue. Several camp fires, above which large pots were boiling, in gipsy fashion, sent forth wreaths of smoke, which blended harmoniously with the deep gray tint of the evening sky. In the middle of the dell rose an extraordinary toad-shaped rock, the head of which was occupied by a bivouac of bugler boys, who must have clambered up there with considerable pains, not having lost their boyish energy, even in the hard fighting of that eventful day. Some of the men were employed in cooking, others in cleaning their arms and accoutrements, others in attending to slight wounds received by themselves or their comrades; and jests and laughter, mingled, I am sorry to say, with a few oaths, were heard on every side. But it was perfect quietude after the turmoil of the day; for the crackling of the fires was the loudest sound heard there; in fact, it was the calm after the storm.

"I inquired for the officers, and found that they had taken possession of a cottage which had escaped the general destruction. There I found them with a large ham and bread and cheese on the small cottage table, and a hamper of wine and another of Bass upon the floor. The post of honor was occupied by the colonel, who was seated in the solitary arm-chair of the cottage, and while

the major and captains had appropriated the remaining chairs and three-legged stools, the subalterns had to be content with resting their backs against the walls, as they sat upon the floor. I was received with a shout of welcome, and presently found myself likewise with my back against the wall, and a hunch of bread and ham in my hand.

"How I did enjoy that hunch of bread and ham after my fatigues and dangers; my wounds smarted and my head ached somewhat, but that troubled me little; the terrible regret was that the number of our mess had been lessened by about a third. A bottle of Bass' emptied into a quart pewter tankard was then presented to me, and I certainly think that it was the most delicious draught I ever took in my life.

"'Come,' said the colonel, 'we'll send the tankard round, and drink to the name of Tunbridge Wells, which will be emblazoned on our colors in golden letters—Dorking is avenged, and the cursed foreigner has found that the old lion's teeth can bite yet.'

"By the by, the tankard was our only drinking vessel, and we had to drink the toast in rotation, combining it with a loving cup as it were.

"'Has the victory been complete, colonel,' I inquired.

"'Of course,' said he, 'we have to rely upon reports at present, which may be exaggerated or unfounded. But as far as we know, they have been driven back from Tunbridge Wells and the Tunbridge Road, with a loss exceeding our own, while between Tunbridge and Reigate their flank has been turned, and their army in Sussex com-

pletely cut off from the army which holds London. There are rumors, moreover, of an attack made upon them from the west, while the cordon of our rapidly increasing levies is being gradually strengthened around London.'

"'And it is rumored also that a naval action has been fought off the coast of Sussex, between our own and their combined fleets, greatly exceeding ours in number. It is said to have been indecisive, but to have answered our purpose in preventing the enemy from maintaining his communications with his own shores,' said a captain, as he lighted a short black clay pipe, and the smoke curled above his bronzed features in a wreath of glory.

"The sweet, peaceful clouds of tobacco-smoke now obscured that little cottage room just as the sulphurous vapors of gunpowder had made murky and miserable what had been the quiet, pleasant watering place of Tunbridge Wells. But though there was a metaphorical similarity, the actual difference was charming after sweating, swearing, bleeding, groaning about a battle-field all day. At first oppressed by a sense of fear; afterwards demoniacally occupied by all the especially unchristian qualities—envy, malice, thirst for vengeance, etc., etc.—it was extraordinary delightful to loll back at one's ease and smoke the pipe of peace; even although an uncarpeted floor and rough wall constituted one's couch. But it is when we do not take severe exercise that we require sofa cushions and easy-chairs for our repose. A hard bench is sufficient luxury for the thoroughly wearied. Then there was matter for extreme self-congratulation in finding oneself only very slightly wounded—sufficiently wounded to

swear by—to say ever after that one had bled for one's country, yet retaining all one's due complement of limbs and vital organs, with their energies unimpaired. I felt as if I was the winner of the Derby and had landed a large sum of money when I had expected to lose and become bankrupt. I felt, in fact, those sensations which can only be described as ecstatic. 'How glorious to be indeed a soldier!' I said to myself; 'and oh! how exquisite is the flavor of this tobacco!' I believe it was the coarsest and rankest shag, but war imparts a peculiar deliciousness to the pipe of peace. Suddenly my high spirits were dismally damped. 'Do you think they will come at us again to-morrow, colonel?' asked the major. 'Not improbably, I should say,' replied the colonel. At us again! what! all that fighting over again; all those horrors to be enacted once more, or possibly several times more; the drama, perhaps, to be performed every day till further notice. The notion was awful, and I began to perceive that I had been prematurely merry.

"We've got our work cut out for us,' said the colonel; 'they have London and Woolwich—our capital and our chief arsenal. But, isolated as we may hope to keep them, they can hardly hold out long, and I scarcely think that they will resort to the uncivilized expedients of burning and destroying, like the Communists of Paris. They may, however, show us some hard fighting yet, in hopes that their fleets may land reinforcements. If they had cut through us and got all Kent into their hands, I'm afraid matters would have looked unpleasant for England.'

'The men of Kent have never been beaten, colonel; and

never will be,' I said; for I was a Kentish man by birth, and proud of my native county. 'Well said,' answered the colonel; 'come, let us have that tankard round again, if there's any liquor left. Let's be as merry as we can. It's not our business to shed tears over the national humiliation. We are soldiers, and our business is only to fight for the country; we will leave the lamentations to the women.' 'By Jove! yes,' said a stout captain; 'life may be short, so let it be merry: and there's one comfort, colonel, no man shall say that the Militia are not soldiers after this day's work. 'Nor the Volunteers neither,' replied the colonel, 'they fought uncommonly well.' 'But I don't think their line could be compared to ours,' said a captain who was thoroughly well-up in the red-book and a smart drill; 'they fought well, but they appeared to me a good deal confused at times.' 'It seems to me,' said our adjutant, 'that the men of the Militia and Volunteers have done their duty to-day just as well as the Linesmen. Our regular regiments have lost so many of their best soldiers, and have been so utterly swamped by recruits of a bad class lately, that really they have little beyond their prestige to show their superiority. But of course they had the advantage in respect to officers, for you may teach a man to shoulder and fire a rifle and keep his place in the ranks in a couple of months, but you can scarcely make a company officer in a couple of years.'

"'That's perfectly true,' said the colonel, 'the Regulars have, of course, had the advantage over the Volunteers at all events, and over ourselves in this respect, that we have never had our full complement of officers; but I beg to

deny that any set of officers, in any service, ever did their duty better than mine to-day.'

"'Bravo! that's kindly spoken, colonel,' said the major, 'send that tankard round again to the health of the colonel, and may he neither have a better nor worse set of officers under his command at the end of the campaign than he has at present; in fact, colonel, we'll be deucedly contented to go on serving with you, and I hope we shall one and all be together round our mess table at no distant date.'

"'With as good appetites and digestions as we've brought to our bread and ham and cheese to-day,' said a subaltern.

"After this a few words were spoken concerning our lost comrades, which brought tears into most of our eyes, but it was worse than useless to mourn, and their fate might be ours on the morrow.

"We managed to get our great-coats brought up to us from the hotel, and also the men's knapsacks, for we had not fought in heavy marching order, and we slept where we had dined; and I seem to recollect having a particularly peaceful and pleasant dream on that night; I thought I was going nutting with your grandmother.

"The next morning we were again under arms at an early hour; and we spent the morning in waiting for the enemy and wishing for breakfast; wondering, in fact, which would arrive first. However, by about noonday our minds, or at all events my own, were considerably eased by the information that he was withdrawing his battalions towards Dorking; and, within an hour after-

wards, a cart containing loaves of bread, and another with some barrels of beer and cider, set our stomachs comparatively at rest also. I had had quite enough of fighting for the present; and I now hoped to have an opportunity of relieving my mind with respect to the fate of your grandmother and your aunts. So far as I knew the tide of battle had not rolled towards Frant; still there was sufficient room for probability that some mischance might have happened to them from the rude soldiery of either side.

"As soon as I could obtain leave of absence I hurried towards Frant. Wearied as I was by the hard work of the previous day, and weakened by the slight loss of blood from which I had suffered, I experienced considerable difficulty in surmounting the hill. When I had arrived at the summit I found little Frant unaltered by the vicissitudes which had affected its great neighbor Tunbridge Wells. The two or three shops seemed to be open as usual, and some boys were playing at cricket on the green. My heart palpitated as I entered your grandmother's aunt's gate. I was still in the full dress uniform in which I had been accoutred on the occasion of my last visit; but my chaco had been battered in, and the pompon which adorned it had disappeared. My tunic was torn in places and discolored by blood and dirt. The steel scabbard of my sword was spotted with rust and had entirely lost its pristine brightness; and no blacking had been forthcoming for my boots in the morning. But I felt that my dingy appearance was more honorable than the smartness of the mere parade soldier.

"As I opened the gate I saw your grandmother appear at the window. She then came to the front door, and I rather expected, or at all events, hoped that she would utter a little hysterical cry and rush into my arms, or burst into tears of joy at seeing me safe, and fall weeping on my shoulder, or display some such ebullition of delight at my return. But I had made no allowance for maiden coyness and English reserve. She simply said, "How do you do,' as if nothing had occurred. I felt disappointed and followed her into the parlor without speaking. There I found the two aunts quietly seated at tea; and they looked at me in a manner which made me think that I ought to have attended to my personal appearance more carefully before coming into their presence. 'Goodness gracious, what a noise you were making all yesterday,' said one of them; 'we thought it was thunder at first, and my sister, who is always much alarmed at thunder-storms, was thinking of taking refuge in the cellar; but our butcher came and told us that a battle was going on, and that the Government had insisted on buying up all his meat, notwithstanding all he could say to the contrary, and that he could not let us have our joint. We then knew that something dreadful must have occurred. Have you been fighting hard; I hope you were victorious?'

"I gave them an account of the events of the day before, and my own share in them, somewhat indignantly; and I believe that I did manage to make them shudder at the danger they had escaped before I left them. I could not remain longer, but I was there sufficient time to observe a certain expression in your grandmother's looks

and tones which caused me to extend to her the most ample forgiveness for her apparent indifference when I first entered.

"The calmness pervading their house had presented a very marvelous contrast to the billows in which I had been buffeting the day before; but the tranquility of the outer world, as I walked back from Frant to Tunbridge Wells that evening, seemed still more wonderful—or rather, I should say, limped back, for I had not taken off my boots for two days, and the amount of exercise my legs had undergone, combined with sleeping on the ground, had somewhat impaired my pedestrian powers for the time. Again, there was a gorgeous sunset, shedding the softest possible light over the landscape. The air was balmy, the birds were singing in the woods, which were already tinted in places with the rich hues of Autumn, and it was difficult to believe that on the preceding day this lovely tract of country had witnessed such an extraordinary September shooting party. But a distant bugle-call again brought back the realities of the scene, and when I reached that part of the road from which Tunbridge Wells Common is overlooked, the aspect of the encampments of the troops aroused the mind to the reception of the fact that a victorous invader had been yesterday checked in his attempt to overrun the fair county of Kent, one of the gardens of England.

"It seemed like a dream. But it was a terrible dream, though in its termination it proved so favorable; for the enemy made no further attempt to force his way in our direction, but fell back upon his supports.

"While we were reposing upon our laurels at and about Tunbridge Wells, the next day the distant booming of heavy guns announced to us that our compatriots were not allowing him to have his own way in other quarters. Indeed he speedily discovered that, notwithstanding his splendid success in the Battle of Dorking, his position in England was altogether untenable. Advancing from the neighborhood of Reading, an army of about 120,000 men attacked him on the Surrey hills, and, after a sharp but decisive action, drove him back, and completely cut off his army in Sussex from his army in London. Again the discipline of the veteran invaders had succumbed to the courage and energy of the new English levies, leavened as they were by a considerable sprinkling of old soldiers. And the excellent firing of the English riflemen had been irresistible in a country so abounding with covers in every direction. I do not mean to say that the invaders could not use their rifles behind hedges as adroitly as ourselves; but the country was not favorable to the maintenance of that magnificent exactness in manœvuring, which had made them so formidable.

"Leaving a sufficient body of men in London to overawe the population, the enemy marched from the ill-fated city, for it had begun to suffer terribly from the exactions of the conquerors, and a severe engagement was fought to the south of London. Quiet suburban districts were deluged with blood, and an infernal machine, just invented at that time, for the use of that fearfully destructive stuff, nitro-glycerine, was awfully effective, but the invader was driven to his entrenchments again. And meanwhile

armies from the east, north, north-west, and west of England, at four distinct points, prevented him from emerging in those directions. A fifth army was gradually drawing towards him on the western borders of Surrey and Sussex, and the army to which I belonged marched from Tunbridge Wells to East Grinstead, with a view to following up the advantages we had gained. A further body of 50,000 men between Dartford and Bromley watched the invader in Woolwich Arsenal.

"But all our exertions, all the zeal with which 500,000 Englishman sprang to arms within a few weeks, might have availed us nothing if our fleet had not been able to keep his fleet at bay. We had effectually recovered from our first disasters, and discovered that time had not yet sapped our maritime strength. The building of ships of war or the hasty construction of armor-plated gun-boats out of existing wooden vessels, which had been commenced in every dockyard in the kingdom, began to send forth a swarm of fighting ships of some kind or another. A considerable number were sent to the bottom by the enemy, but altogether they held their own, and prevented him from landing reinforcements.

"In fact, the position of the invader soon became hopeless. He had eaten up all the food and drunk all the liquor upon which he could lay his hands, in the vicinity of London and Woolwich, and also in the portions of Surrey and Sussex which he held. The strength of the armies opposed to him on every side completely kept him in check. Still he maintained his position, in the hopes of rescue from the Continent; and we abstained from at-

tacking him in London from the desire of avoiding the destruction which would result in the event of his defending the place. Certainly we could have witnessed the demolition of many of the public edifices and streets of London without overwhelming regret, as regards their loss as architectural monuments; but we considered the feelings of the metropolitan ratepayers, and abstained. Besides, it occurred to us, in regard to the buildings that it was perhaps better to endure those ills we had than fly to others which we knew not of—for it by no means followed that the Board of Works would devise any architecturally superior to those in existence.

"We finally crushed the enemy's spirits by again dividing his armies between Dorking and Worthing, an engagement in which I had a share, and in which I was honorably wounded, rather more severely than at Tunbridge Wells. But my sword received no more notches in this second battle at which I was present. It was not a hand-to-hand affair as at Tunbridge Wells. We skirmished cautiously behind hedges and haystacks, up hill and down dale, till I received a bullet in the calf of my leg, and lay where I fell, upon a moss-grown bank on the outskirts of a little wood, from which we had started a number of pheasants.

"I had not even seen the enemy when I felt him so unpleasantly. Distant cracks, accompanied by dots of smoke from a wooded hill-side, had brought me down at some six or seven hundred yards' distance. I was taken into a deserted farm house, and made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances; for the wounded had no cause

to fear being neglected. Throughout the country numerous Volunteer ambulance corps had been formed, which followed the combatants with great zeal and courage. Ladies, young and old, had rendered their services in such numbers, as to leave no doubt that assistance would not be wanting; while others constituted themselves amateur *vivandières*, and were charmingly useful so long as their little kegs or big flasks of spirits lasted. Fortunately, my wound was only in the fleshy part of the leg, and I felt that I had much cause for congratulation in escaping so easily. Not many days afterwards the enemy capitulated. The invaders, now divided into four bodies —in London, at Woolwich, at Dorking, and at Worthing —laid down their arms, and their capitualation was made the basis of the terms of peace. But of course we made a mess of the negotiations; in fact, we had been in such a desperate state of alarm at the beginning of the invasion that we were only too pleased to get rid of them on any terms. Instead of demanding an indemnity for our expenses, or the return of Alsace and Lorraine to the French, or something of the kind, and of threatening to carry the war into the enemy's borders, we simply let things return to the condition in which they were before the invasion. The armies of the enemy evacuated Holland and Belgium at the same time as we allowed the invaders to depart peacefully out of England—and not only peacefully, but convivially, and stuffed full of beef, and pudding, and beer.

"But although we came out of the affair thus gloriously it cost us a deal of money—the stoppage of industry and

trade, the tremendous loss inflicted for a time on our foreign commerce, were, of course more disastrous in a country like England, dependent upon mercantile and manufacturing pursuits for the support of its population. Then we had difficulties in India at that time, and the Fenians were troubling.—But I think my story has lasted long enough."

"I wouldn't mind listening to another fight, grandpapa.'

"You must have heard quite enough about fighting for one day."

"Thank you very much for telling us the story, grandpapa."

"Dear, dear, I never thought to tell such a long story, when you mentioned the notches in the old sword."

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